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Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 SOFIA 2553

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: XH, BU, YO, GR, RO, UR, TU, AL
SUBJECT: DEVELOPMENTS IN BALKAN DIPLOMACY AS SEEN IN SOFIA

REF (NOTAL): A) SOFIA 2233; B) BELGRADE 7920; C) ANKARA 8878;
D) BUCHAREST 8852; E) BUCHAREST 9006; F) INR REPORT NO. 890

1. SUMMARY: RECENT YUGOSLAV AND GREEK EFFORTS TO CONVENE A
SECOND MULTILATERAL BALKAN CONFERENCE, STRONGLY SUPPORTED BY
ROMANIA, HAVE FOR THE PRESENT BEEN STYMIED NOT ONLY BY BUL-
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GARIAN (AND SOVIET) OPPOSITION, BUT ALSO Q AN INCREASINGLY
COOL TURKISH ATTITUDE. THIS MORE NEGATIVE TURKISH STAND
ALLEVIATES WHATEVER PRESSURE THE BULGARIANS WOULD HAVE FELT
FROM AN ISOLATED POSITION. IT ALSO REFLECTS INCREASING-
LY DISTANT BULGARIAN-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS, AND CLOSER
TURKISH-BULGARIAN VIEWPOINTS AND PRACTICAL BILATERAL
COOPERATION IN A NUMBER OF AREAS. MEANWHILE CHINA IS

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REPORTED TO BE WOOING THE BULGARIANS (AND OTHER EASTER EUROPEAN WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES), AND THE BULGARIANS ARE TRYING TO IMPROVE TIES WITH ALBANIA IN THE WAKE OF DETERIORATION OF SINO-ALBANIAN RELATIONS. THERE APPEARS TO BE A FAIR AMOUNT OF MOTION, BUT NOT MUCH PROPECT FOR MEANINGFUL MOVEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. LATEST ROUND OF EXCHANGES CONCERNING A BALKAN CONFERENCE TO FOLLOW THE ATHENS MEETING OF EARLY 1976 WAS INITIATED BY YUGOSLAVIA (REFS A AND B) THROUGH DEMARCHES IN EARLY OCTOBER. ALL RESPONDED POSITIVELY AND WITH VARIOUS PROPOSALS FOR AGENDA BY EARLY NOVEMBER, EXCEPT BULGARIA (REF B), WHICH STILL HAS NOT RESPONDED DIRECTLY TO YUGOSLAV AIDE MEMOIRE. (AS NOTED BELOW, THE BULGARIANS HAVE UNOFFICIALLY RESPONDED IN THE NEGATIVE WITH RESPECT TO A MEETING AT THIS TIME".)

3. SUBSEQUENTLY, THE GREEK CSCE CONFERENCE REPRESENTATIVE (WITH AT LEAST YUGOSLAV ENCOURAGEMENT) ARRANGED AN

INFORMAL MEETING OF CSCE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FIVE "ATHENS POWERS" IN BELGRADE. THE BULGARIAN REPRESENTATIVE SAID HE HAD NO "MANDATE" TO AGREE TO ANYTHING, AND HE ARGUED FOR LEAVING BALKAN COOPERATION TO BILATERAL CONTRACTS AND ARRAGEMENTS. (THIS IS CLEARLY THE STANDARD BULGARIAN LINE ON THE SUBJECT, WHICH I HA HEARD FROM CONFIDENTIAL

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SEVERAL SENIOR PARTY LEADERS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.) THE TURKISH POSITION ALSO SEEMED MORE COOL TOWARD A CONFERENCE, WHICH HAD BEEN EXPECTED TO BE CALLED AND HOSTED BY TURKEY. THE UPSHOT OF THE BELGRADE CONSULTATION WAS THAT THE QUESTION COULD BE FURTHER CONSIDERED AFTER THE CSCE CONFERENCE, AND THAT AT BELGRADE THEY COULD ALL SUPPORT A GENERAL REFERENCE TO COOPERATION AMONG VARIOUS GROUPS OF CSCE MEMBERS WITHOUT SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE BALKAN REGION (A DE MINIMIS FORMULATION TO PREVENT AN ERUPTION OF BULGARIAN OBJECTION IN THE LARGER OPEN FORUM).

4. THE TITO-CEAUSESCU MEETING (REFS D AND E) LET TO THEIR AGREEMENT TO PURSUE A MULTILATERAL MEETING, BUT ONLY IF ACCEPTED BY ALL FIVE "ATHENS POWERS". THEY ALSO NOTED THE SIGNS OF NEW TURKISH RETICENCE, IN ADDITION TO THE EXPECTED BULGARIAN RECALCITRANCE. THEY HOPE FOR GRADUAL PROGRESS AFTER BELGRADE.

5. IT IS FREQUENTLY OBSERVED, FOR EXAMPLE BY THE TURKS AND THE YUGOSLAVS (REFS B AND C), THAT THE SOVIETS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR "PRESSURING" OR "KEEPING" THE BULGARIANS

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FROM A MORE FORTHCOMING STANCE ON BALKAN COOPERATION. IT
IS CLEAR THAT THE SOVIETS ARE NOT KEEN ON BALKAN REGIONAL
COOPERATION IN WHICH BULGARIA IS LEFT "ALONE" TO FACE
THE OTHER FOUR, BUT IT IS LESS CLEAR THAT BULGARIA
WANTS TO DO SO AND IS PREVENTED ONLY BY MOSCOW'S OPPOSI-
TION. THE YUGOSLAVS HAVE REPORTED "INDICATIONS" THAT THE
SOVIETS MIGHT ALLOW BULGARIAN PARTICIPATION IF HUNGARY
AND PERHAPS CZECHOSLOVAKIA WEJ ALSO INCLUDED (REF B).

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 SOFIA 2553

I HAVE HEARD THE SAME THING FROM MY GREEK COLLEAGUE
HERE, BUT HIS SOURCE IS YUGOSLAV; IT WOULD BE INTERESTING
TO KNOW WHERE THIS "INDICATION" HAD BEEN GIVEN. MY
YUGOSLAV COLLEAGUE HERE, WHO HAS BEEN QUITE OPEN ON A
NUMBER OF MATTERS, HAS NOT MENTIONED IT; HE DID SAY
THAT WHEN TITO RAISED THE SUBJECT OF BALKAN COOPERATION
IN MOSCOW BREZHNEV COMMENTED THAT THE SOVIET UNION ITSELF,

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AS A "MEDITERRANEAN POWER", WAS AN INTERESTED PARTY IN
THE BALKANS.

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6. THE BULGARIANS HAVE ESTABLISHED (BUT NEVER ANNOUNCED)
A SPECIAL HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE ON BALKAN AFFAIRS CHAIRED
BY LEADING POLITBURO MEMBER ALEKSANDUR LILOV, WITH DEPUTY
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS NIKOLAI MINCHEV AS HIS DEPUTY.
(MINCHEV HAS OVERSIGHT RESPONSIBILITY AMONG OTHER THINGS
FOR BULGARIAN RELATIONS WITH YUGOSLAVIA, GREECE AND TURKEY,
BUT NOT WARSAW PACT MEMBER, COUNTRIDW.)

7. MINCHEV'S VISIT TO TURKEY IN LATE NOVEMBER EVIDENT-
LY PLAYED A RATHER IMPORTANT PART IN RECENT DEVELOPMENTS.
HE HAS TOLD ME (AND ALSO THE YUGOSLAV AMBASSADOR TQT
THE TKKS EXPRESSED AGREEMENT WITH THE BULGARIANS THAT
THERE WAS NO NEED TO "RUSH" TOWARD A MULTILATERAL
MEETING, AND THAT IT WAS BETTER TO CONCENTRATE ON BI-
LATERAL ARRANGEMENTS. THIS ACCOUNT PROBABLY HAS A
BULGARIAN GLOSS ON IT, AND IT IS NOT REFLECTED AT ALL
IN TURKISH ACCOUNTS (REF C, AND THE TURKISH AMBASSADOR
HERE). BUT I SUSPECT THERE IS A LARGE ELEMENT OF TRUTH
TO IT. CERTAINLY THE YUGOSLAVS AND ROMANIANS BELIEVE
SO, AND THE TURKISH POSITION IN THE BELGRADE SIDE SHOW
MEETING REFLECTS IT. MINCHEV MADE THE MOST OF IT WITH
THE YUGOSLAV AMBASSADOR, RELISHING THE FACT THAT BUL-
GARIA WAS NOT ISOLATED IN ITS STAND. IN ADDITION, APART
FROM THE ANNOUNCED AGREEMENT ON EMIGRATION OF ETHNIC
TURKS FROM BULGARIA TO TURKEY (SOFIA 2473), A NUMBER OF
OTHER AGREEMENTS WERE EVIDENTLY REACHED. FOR EXAMPLE,
ALTHOUGH MY TURKISH COLLEAGUE HAS NOT CHOSEN TO MENTION
THEM AT OUR LATEST LOCAL MEETING OF "NATO GROUP" AMBAS-
SADORS, A TURKISH DELEGATION HERE (NEVER PUBLICLY ANNOUNC-
ED) HAS IN RECENT DAYS GOTTEN BULGARIAN AGREEMENT TO
CURB RECENT BULGARIAN GUN-RUNNING TO AND THROUGH TURKEY.
(THE TURKS LAST MONTH CAUGHT ONE SHIP LOADED WITH UN-
DECLARED ARMS, SAILING FROM VARNA; THE BULGARIANS SHRUGGED
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AND ELID IT WAS A CASH AND CARRY SALE, AND SUGGESTED THE
TURKS COULD OBVIOUSLY DO WITH THE CONTRABAND WHAT THEY
LIKED. THE NEW AGREEMENT, IF HONORED, WILL CURTAIL SUCH
PRACTICE.) ANOTHER TURKISH DELEGATION, ALSO NOT
PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED, IS HERE WORKING ON RESIDUAL MINOR
BOUNDARY CLARIFICATIONS.

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8. MY YUGOSLAV COLLEAGUE HAS HINTED DARKLY THAT HE BELIEVES THE CHANGED TURKISH ATTITUDE STEMS FROM ANKARA'S EXPECTATIONS OF FAVORS FROM THE SOVIET UNION, PERHAPS IN CONJUNCTION WITH A POSSIBLE HIGH-LEVEL TURKISH VISIT TO MOSCOW. HE ALSO REPORTS THAT MINCHEV TALKED NOT ONLY WITH THE GOVERNMENT BUT ALSO WITH ECEVIT'S PARTY AND ASCERTAINED THAT THEY TOO AGREE THAT BILATERAL CONTACTS ARE MORE SUITABLE THAN A MULTILATERAL BALKAN CONFERENCE.

9. THEHKOMANIANS CERTAINLY WISH TO SEE ANOTHER BALKAN CONFERENCE AND HAVE STRONGLY FAVORED ONE, BUT ONLY WITH BULGARIA PARTICIPATING (REF D). FROM INDICATIONS HERE, THEY ARE RATHER DISCOURAGED AT THIS POINT, PRIMARILY BECAUSE ONUTHE STATE OF YUGOSLAV-BULGARIAN RELATIONS BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF THE NEW TURKISH RETICENCE.

10. THE YUGOSLAVS CONTINUE TO BE VERY SUSPICIOUS OF POSSIBLE EVENTUAL BULGARIAN (SOVIET-BACKED) CLAIMS ON YUGOSLAV MACEDONIA. THEY ARE NOT REASSURED BY BULGARIAN STATEMENTS OF NO TERRITORIAL CLAIMS, AND ARE BITTER OVER BULGARIAN CLAIMS THAT THERE ARE NO "MACEDONIANS" IN BUL-GARIA AND NO "MACEDONIAN" LANGUAGE. BILATERAL RELATIONS GO ON MORE OR LESS "CORRECTLY"; THE TRADE PLAN FOR 1978

($225 MILLION, TWO-WAY) WILL BE ABOUT TEN PERCENT LOWER THAN THE ONE FOR 1977, WHICH IS NOT BEING MET, BUT

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AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY ROME
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 SOFIA 2553

THIS IS ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT RATHER THAN POLITICAL.
ON THE OTHER HAND, WHEN THE THRACIAN GOLD EXHIBIT
OPENED IN BELGRADE TWO WEEKS AGO IT WAS NOT ATTENDED BY
LYUDMILLA ZHIVKOVA (TODOR ZHIVKOV'S DAUGHTER, AND
CHAIRMAN OF THE BULGARIAN CABINET-LEVEL COMMITTEE ON
CULTURE), AS IT HAD BEEN IN WASHINGTON AND LONDON.
IT TURNS OUT THAT, FROM THE YUGOSLAV STANDPOINT, THE
BULGARIANS "INVITED" ZHIVKOVA'S ATTENDANCE THEMSELVES,
AND THE YUGOSLAVS BRIDLED AT BEING TOLD WHOM TO INVITE.
FROM THE BULGARIAN STANDPOINT, THE YUGOSLAV SELECTION OF
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THE MINISTER OF CULTURE OF SERBIA TO REPRESENT THE YUGO-
SLAV SIDE UNDULY DOWNGRADED THE YUGOSLAV HOSTING, AND
THEY FINALLY SENT A JUNIOR DEPUTY TO ZHIVKOVA (AND HAVE
GIVEN THE WHOLE PRESENCE OF THE EXHIBIT IN BELGRADE
MINIMAL ATTENTION).

11. BULGARIAN FOREIGN MINISTER (AND NOW FQL VLITBKO
MEMBER) MLADENOV HAS BEEN SAYING ABROAD (SOFIA 2521)
THAT BULGARIA WOULD ACCEPT NEUTRAL THIRD PARTY "MEDIATION"
OF THE MACEDONIAN DISPUTE (E.G., THE VATICAN, THE INTER-
NATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE, OR THE GREEK ORTHODOX PATRI-
ARCH). THE YUGOSLAVS DON'T LIKE THIS PLAY FOR A POSE
OF REASONABLENESS, WHICH IS ALL THEY CREDIT IT AS BEING;
HOW DOES ONE MEDIATE A POSSIBLE FUTURE CLAIM OF A DESIRE
TO REUNITE ALL BULGARIANS?

12. AN EXAMPLE OF THE LOW STATE OF YUGOSLAV-BULGARIAN
RELATIONS IS A RECENT SERIES OF 18 ARTICLES IN THE BEL-
GRADE NEWSPAPER VECHERNE NOVOSTI DESCRIBING IN BEST COLD
WAR FASHION POLICE MEASURES, POLITICAL PRESSURES, CONCEN-
TRATION CAMPS AND TORTURE IN BULGARIA, CITING ALLEGED
WITNESSES, ETC. THE BULGARIAN PAPER POGLED (DECEMBER 19)
CARRIES A COMMENTARY TITLED "IN WHOSE INTEREST?" CITING
GREEK AND ITALIAN NEWSPAPER ARTICLES RETAILING THE YUGO-
SLAV ACCOUNT, AND CITES APPROVINGLY A COMMENT BY IL
MESSAGERO THAT "IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE THAT SUCH PUBLICATION
MIGHT BE AN INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE OF THE NEWSPAPER."

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POGLED SAYS THE YUGOSLAV ARTICLES ARE A "PROVOCATION",
"IN THE SERVICE OF ANTI-SOCIALIST PROPAGANDA", AND "NOT
CONSISTENT WITH THE APPROACH TO RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO
NEIGHBORLY, TO SAY NOTHING OF TWO NEIGHBORING SOCIALIST,
COUNTRIES." AND "SUCH AN APPROACH CANNOT BE ACCEPTED
BY THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA."
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13. ALBANIA, NOT EVEN CHOOSING TO BE PART OF EUROPE
FOR PURPOSES OF THE CSCE, IS OBVIOUSLY NOT IN ANYONE'S
CURRENT PICTURE FOR A BALKAN MULTILATERAL CONFERENCE.
BUT THE ALBANIAN-CHINESE ESTRANGEMENT HAS RAISED INTEREST
IN REFORGING CLOSER TIES. I UNDERSTAND FROM A GOOD
SOURCE THAT BULGARIA HAS PROPOSED AN EXHANGE OF AMBAS-
SADORS (AT PRESENT THERE IS A COUNSELOR CHARGE IN SOFIA),
BUT WITHOUT RESPONSE. BULGARIA REPORTEDLY ALSO HAS
AGREED EAGERLY TO ALBANIAN SUGGESTIONS ON TRADE, NOT
EVEN ATTEMPTING TO BARGAIN TERMS. BUT WHETHER ALBANIA
WILL FOR SOME TIME MOVE ANY CLOSER TO BULGARIA OR OTHER
WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES IS RATHER DOUBTFUL.

14. MEANWHILE, THE CHINESE ARE EVIDENTLY INTERESTED IN
A MORE ACTIVE PRESENCE IN BULGARIA AND THE OTHER ORTHODOX
WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES (MOSCOW 17607). WE HAVE NOT YET
SEEN REVERBERATIONS OF THAT IN BULGARIA, BUT ANTI-CHINESE
BLASTS ELSEWHERE IN THE PACT AREA (MOSCOW 18005) DO
SUGGEST SOME ARE MAKING A DEFENSIVE RECORD AGAINST CHARGES
OF BEING SOFT ON PEKING. THE YUGOSLAV AMBASSADOR SAYS
THAT BULGARIA (AND THE USSR) INITIALLY REACTED FAVORABLE
TO TITO'S VISIT TO PEKING, AND ONLY LATER BECAME UNHAPPY
AND CONCERNED.

15. SINCE DRAFTING THIS COMMENTARY, REF E HAS JUST REACHED
SOFIA. IT PROVIDES USEFUL BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS.
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IN THE PRESENT MESSAGE AND FROM
OTHER POSTS SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TO FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF
ANALYSIS. AT THIS JUNCTURE AND FROM THIS VANTAGE POINT,
WE WOULD BE EVEN LESS SANGUINE THAN THE INR PAPER ON THE
PROSPECTS FOR AN EARLY BALKAN MEETING, AND LESS INCLINED
TO SEE THE POSSIBILITIES FOR A MEETING WITHOUT BULGARIA
OR WITH ALBANIA IN ITS STEAD. BUT WE WOULD AGREE THAT
THE ISSUE OF MULTILATERAL BALKAN COOPERATION WILL NOT
DISAPPEAR.
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